

JACQUELINE KENNEDY

Nation mourns a

ONASSIS 1929-1994

woman of courage

'Shaped dreams profoundly'

By Gary Fields
and Christine Sparta
USA TODAY

NEW YORK — The gracefulness that was Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis' life brought mourners out across the nation to grieve and reminisce as news of her death spread.

In Washington, President Clinton noted the first lady brought dignity and grace to a mourning nation after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated.

"Even in the face of impossible tragedy, she carried the grief of her family and our entire nation with a calm power



By Timothy Clary, Agence France-Presse
GETTING AWAY: John F. Kennedy Jr. is escorted to a limousine by a New York police officer Thursday after visiting his mother, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, at her Fifth Avenue apartment.

that somehow reassured all of us who mourned," Clinton said.

"We hope that Mrs. Onassis' children, John and Carolyn, and grandchildren find solace in the extraordinary contributions she made to our country."

Outside Onassis' Fifth Avenue apartment, mourners came in small groups, stayed briefly in the cold, drizzling rain and left quietly.

"I just feel bad for the children. Now they have lost their mother. They lost their father a long time ago," said a tearful Susan Cunningham, 36, of Pittsburgh, who came with her sister and left a rose outside.

Jackie Hayman, 52, a fashion designer, called Onassis a "very great person. She set a standard for Americans for class and style."

Nicholas Appis, 29, who waited on her as a caterer said, "She was always very nice to me. She was always a mysterious woman."

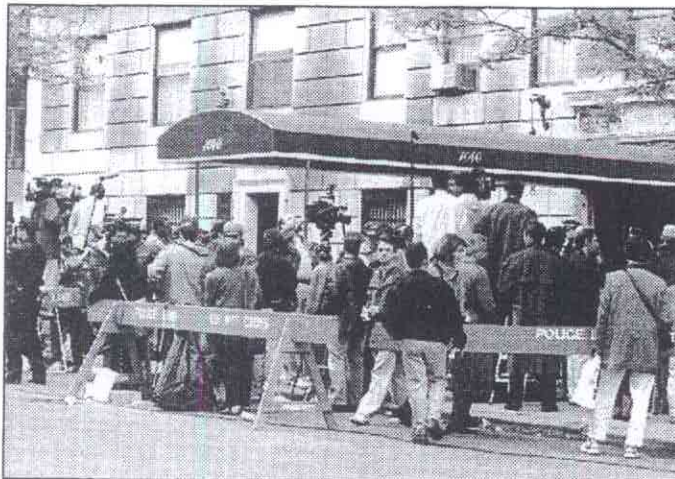
"Few women throughout history have touched the hearts and shaped the dreams of Americans more profoundly," former president Ronald Reagan said in a statement.

Lady Bird Johnson, who succeeded Onassis as first lady, said her predecessor's dignity helped hold a grief-stricken nation together.

"In times of hope, she captured our hearts. In tragedy, her courage helped salve a nation's grief," Mrs. Johnson said. "I always thought of her as my friend."

"Jackie Onassis brought great dignity and grace to the White House and was, indeed, a charming and wonderful first lady," said former president George Bush.

"She was an important part of both a time of great hope and exhilaration for our nation



By Peter Morgan, Reuters

MEDIA CRUSH: Journalists and passers-by gather outside Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis' home, where she died Thursday.

and an hour of its greatest tragedy," said Nellie Connally, widow of the former governor who was wounded in Dallas when Kennedy was killed. "She will be missed."

Family members visited Onassis throughout the day Thursday — including children John F. Kennedy Jr. and Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg and Onassis' longtime companion Maurice Tempelsman.

Onassis' parish priest, Monsignor George Bardes of St. Thomas More Roman Catholic Church, visited in the afternoon, heard her confession, gave her communion and administered the sacrament of the sick. Formerly known as last rites, the sacrament of the sick is available to any seriously ill member of the Roman Catholic Church.

At 9:30 p.m. Onassis' sister, Lee Radziwill, left the apartment in tears after a 45-minute evening visit, accompanied by Onassis' half-brother, James Lee Auchincloss.

Other callers included Robert F. Kennedy's widow, Ethel, and Sargent Shriver.

Singer Carly Simon — a neighbor from Martha's Vineyard, where Onassis has a home — visited in the early afternoon and said Onassis was conscious. "I love her very much," she said, in tears.

Sisters-in-law Eunice Shriver and Pat Lawford were jostled by the media. A stone-faced JFK Jr. left the building with Caroline and her husband, Edwin Schlossberg, at 2:30 p.m., prompting a media stampede. Maria Shriver came at 4 p.m. and stayed 40 minutes.

On the pavement were onlookers like Tom Sembros, 25, a registrar for the National Academy of Design in New York who was making his way to the nearby Metropolitan Museum of Art.

He stood outside in the rain for about an hour. "I think it's an historic moment, kind of an end of an era," he said.

Contributing: Bruce Frankel